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JANUARY 7-20, 2016

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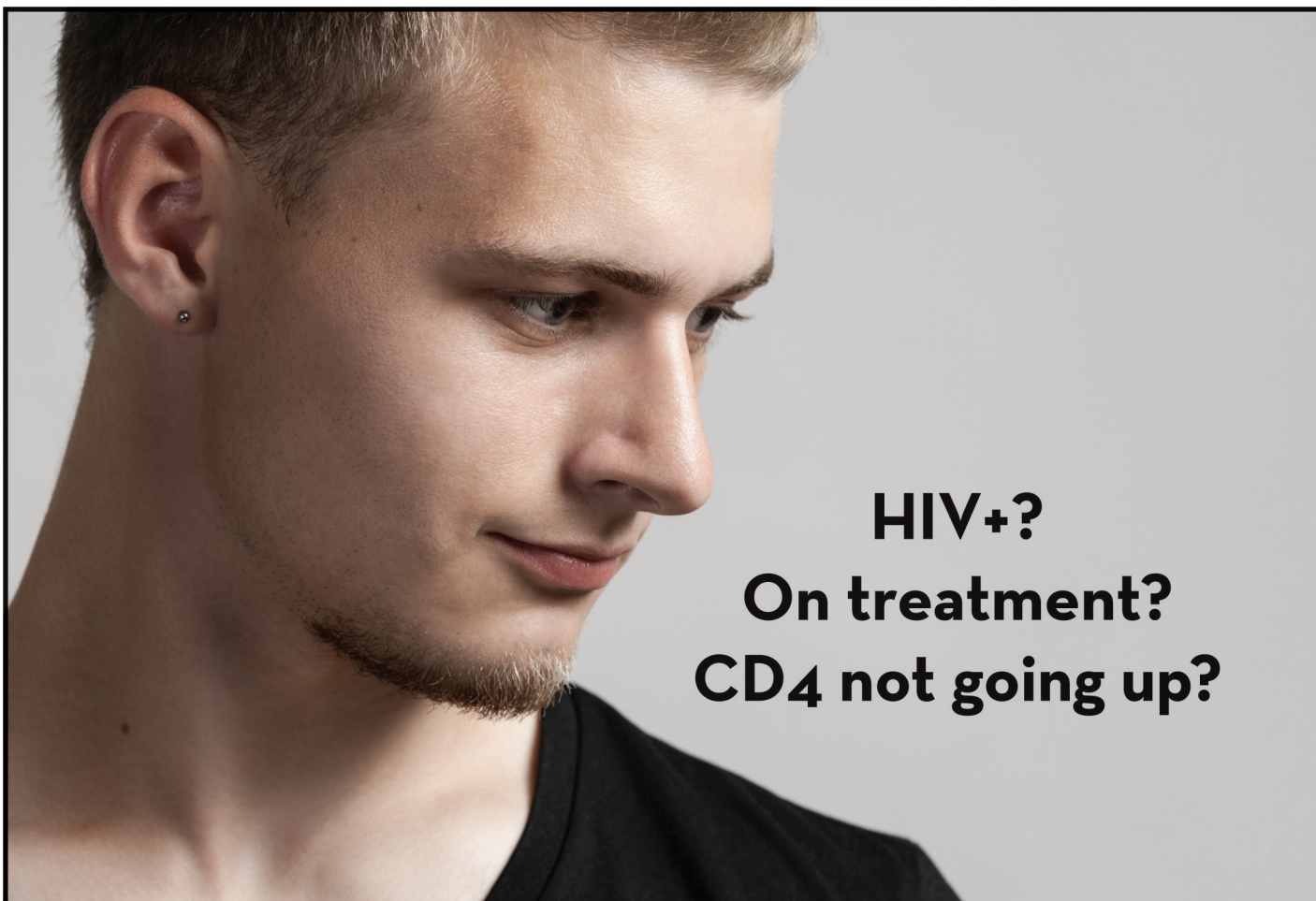
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Page 36: Photo by Erin Pederson. Page 14: Photo by Justin D. Gallo Photography. Page 20: Photo by Carla Waldemar. Page 40: Photo by Randy Stern.

ONLINE

ON THE COVER

Winter in Minnesota is the perfect time to get out and stay busy with our Winter What To Do, featuring the National Figure Skating Championships (Ashley Wagner pictured here) in St. Paul.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Figure Skating

CORRECTION

The photo of Tim Campbell on page 48 of the iPad/iPhone version of Issue 536 should have been credited to Mark Luinenburg, courtesy of Tim Campbell.



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Jeremy Nuese



Jeremy graduated from the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Accounting (yes, he is a "numbers guy"). After a 10 year career practicing accounting and a 10 year career as an Executive Recruiter focusing specifically on accounting and finance professionals, Jeremy has developed a specific ability to explain "numbers" to people. In 2011, Jeremy was talking with one of his life-long friends, David Lozinski, the Principal of First Equity Mortgage and decided to transition his focus to originating mortgage loans and joined First Equity Mortgage.

Throughout Jeremy's career in providing service to others, the reputation of the organization and people that he works with is paramount to him. He chose to work with First Equity Mortgage because of its phenomenal reputation in the mortgage industry. That fact allows him to provide the best common sense solutions to his clients' borrowing needs. And as an inactive CPA and a Loan Officer, Jeremy has developed strong knowledge of loan products to ensure the appropriate fit for his clients.

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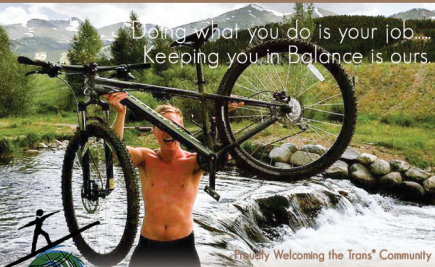


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Happy New Year!

Welcome to 2016. I hope the end of 2015 was satisfying and the move into 2016 hasn't been too jarring. I always like to take this first issue and look at what's coming up for the next year for Lavender Media. It's an exciting time and we've got fresh eyes and minds.

I'm extremely pleased that Shane Lueck is now a full-time presence in our editorial department. From starting as a student volunteer four years ago to becoming a part-time employee to now being with us in full capacity, his impact has shown favorably on what Lavender Media's become in recent years. Shane's hard work, self-direction, superb interview skills, story ideas, and ability to string together stories in record time are all aspects that will enable Lavender to expand our coverage and footprint in Minnesota and beyond and free up some of my time for growing our influence and reach in terms of visibility and involvement.

In terms of increased visibility and involvement, I'm also happy to welcome John Mark to Lavender Media as Arts Editor-At-Large. We've already seen John Mark's work in our pages in features such as the recent fashion piece, "Wintering," and profiles of Lizzo (in the Pride Issue) and Shamir (in this issue), and now he'll be telling us what's what on the back page of every issue starting with the next one. The idea of having an Arts Editor-At-Large indicates that we're spreading out and being more intentional with our community involvement both here at home and globally. John Mark is a choreographer, creative director, producer, personality, and overall wonderful addition to the Lavender team.

The Lavender team will also be expanding as I'll be able to direct more attention to working with students. A few times each year, I've been invited to speak to some classes and visiting journalists at some of the area colleges and universities. This niche publication of ours is such a unique media outlet in terms of history and reach and readership that to be able to tell people about it is a passion of mine. But, even more exciting, is the prospect of inviting students to work with us and create content, making the voices more diverse in age and experience and knowledge. How can I help train their eyes to see things through the diverse lens of this community? How can they teach me to expand what I know? How can I learn from them and their newer, less scratched lenses? If you're a college student in an area of study that could benefit from collaborating with Lavender Media and you're reading this, consider this your invitation to find this post on our website and read how you can submit materials to me to be considered for the student volunteer program. I'd be happy to look at your school's internship guidelines and see if we can work together.

Also in the areas of visibility and involvement, please find Lavender on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Newsstand. Facebook is a fickle

creature, prone to flights of fancy. Though I fought tooth and nail against having anything to do with math or math lingo in my life, I now have to pay attention to algorithms on social media, thanks to Facebook. I always have to laugh that it seems like we need to depend on Facebook, despite having a website with all of our stories very obvious and find-able right there at www.LavenderMagazine.com. But, still, most of us keep a tab open with Facebook as we go about our days on our computers and now prefer to be invited to websites for content by way of cleverly introduced links...and Lavender does that, too. We invite you to find, like, and follow "Lavender Magazine" so you can be the first to know when there's fresh content on the website, both stories that are in our print issues as well as online-only content that occurs multiple times every day. We'll also be running contests on Facebook, promoting our events, and posting call-for-entries for reader submissions for our wedding issues and other features for which we'd like your feedback.

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Please tune in for Big Gay News. You can find it at @biggaynews on Twitter, subscribe to the Big Gay News podcast, and also follow it on Facebook. Linda Raines and Shane Lueck compile the stories and Shane and I started splitting the podcasting duties late in 2015 after taking over the reins from Pierre Tardif. I've learned that no matter how much I try to follow current world events for all sorts of subjects, yet one more news source for the Big Gay News makes my days even that much more rich. Not only do the stories keep me informed, but they help me draw connections between different world events and what goes on here in Minnesota. We are only a small part of such a big picture.

Here's to a year full of rich information and experiences. Thank you for joining us and I'll see you online, on the stands, and at our events.

With thanks and love. ■



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Sticks and Stones and Words — Can Kill You

No doubt bipedal humanoids have used hateful speech to harm others as soon as they learned to communicate with grunts and clicks.

That's how voodoo really works. Plant a dark suggestion in a pliant mind, and the target believes and declines. It works at home: tell your child he or she is ugly, stupid, unlovable, and they will believe. The harm may be unintentional, thoughtless; regretted the second it's uttered. But once it has hit the target, the damage is done.

What about words calculated and carefully aimed? It is criminally disingenuous for those spewing hatred today — in the media, on television, in political speeches — to claim that none of their words have any effect, that none of the shooters who have slaughtered dozens of innocents in just the past several weeks (how many more between this writing and its publication?) have not been fueled to some degree by their careless and unfounded rants?

How can one not believe that the lying, cobbled-together film on Planned Parenthood's practices, proven to be false, did not in some way prompt the shooter to injure many and kill three while muttering "No more baby parts"?

Others from political and church forums are calling for the killing of presumed terrorists, one in particular for the wholesale killing of terrorists' families, not specifying whether these would include the extermination of parents and siblings of our home-grown, white terrorists.

All these killings urged by a supposedly Christian group of average Americans and patriotic politicians. They'll have to be timed carefully to work with others who have their own killing agendas, like the man of the cloth who recently called for the killing of all gays before Christmas (if you are reading this, he may have bumped his target date to, say, Valentine's Day in 2016).

What to say? The cause and effect are obvious, to this writer, but of course the hate-mongers won't agree. One, in the aftermath of the San Bernardino massacre, accused Planned Parenthood (though that Colorado pol may now face a recall).

The question is: does that individual, and the others, calling for death and laying blame wildly about themselves on whomever they wish to tarnish, really believe what they're saying? If so, then what kind of mass delusion or insanity has overtaken segments of our population? If not, and she and so many others are lying, using outright lies to tarnish reputations and worse; to urge the killing of hundreds, even thousands. What is their agenda?

The hate-speak is not going to stop, and the sane thing to do is not to retaliate with a, "Why you lying..." but to ferret out what exactly their goals are. Screaming hateful things at cancer won't effect a cure.

Cui bono? Who wins, and why are they choosing this tactic? Without that knowledge, there will be no firm ground, no toe-hold from which to fight back and stop them cold. ■

Dear Editor:

For decades I have held that Tim Campbell, founding editor of the *GLC Voice*, is the most important figure in Minnesota's GLBT history. The choice of Tim as *Lavender's* Person of the Year(s) is well deserved indeed. George Holdgrafer's observant interview and introduction puts that into sharp focus. Though Tim has not lived here for several years we still feel his impact. The fact that GLBT people in the Twin Cities have options and respect they did not have in the 1970s and 1980s owes incalculably to Tim.

The collective consciousness of that time was very different. The AIDS epidemic created a kind of mass psychic terror not unlike the fear of terrorism the country feels today. Gay men were pariahs, HIV-positive or not.

Tim raged against the proverbial machine and spoke openly about safe sex and government indifference. He was to the Twin Cities what Larry Kramer was to New York. Against the grain of "Minnesota Nice" Tim also covered murders of local gay men some of whom were closeted government figures. He openly criticized both political parties and the *Star Tribune* when he disagreed with them. He called anti-sex feminists on the carpet for their scorched earth hyperbole when no one else had the guts. He rates with Camille Paglia in that regard.

I was fortunate enough to review plays for the *GLC Voice* during its last two years. Tim realized the importance of the arts and was one of the best Twin Cities arts writers himself. He championed queer stage work and the voices of marginalized people in general. We all benefit, even today, from the man's the bold intellectual energy. He opened doors for queer equality.

John Townsend ■

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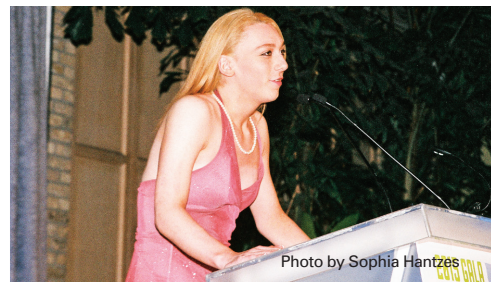
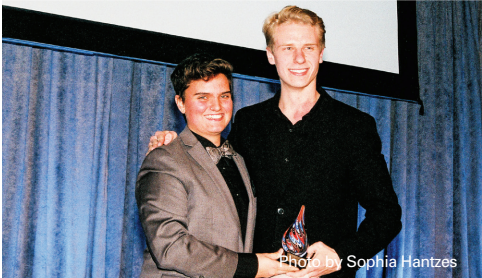
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The Best Brothers. Photo by Justin D. Gallo Photography

THE BEST BROTHERS

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www.loudmouthcollective.com

After Kyle and Hamilton's mother is killed in a strange way at

a gay Pride parade, the sons are left to make final arrangements. This brings out unresolved issues. Loudmouth Collective director Natalie Novacek observes, "Competing for her affection, surviving

the revolving door of suitors that was her love life, and believing the other to be loved most or best or hardest, these brothers have been at odds since day one. Now that their mother is dead, they are faced with a kind of proximity and emotional vulnerability that they have not experienced in their lives. Not only do we see how their mother shaped their relationship in their formative years, but how she continues to influence them after their death." *The Best Brothers* was written by Daniel MacIvor.

A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO LOVE & MURDER

Jan. 5–10

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www.hennepintheatretrust.org

The 2013–2014 season Tony Award-winner for Best Musical makes its first splash in the Twin Cities. Armed with wild ambition, Monty Navarro, a distant heir to a fortune, will do almost anything to secure that proverbial "pot of gold." He lives on the edge, using tactics involving sex and clever deceptions. Composer-lyricist Steven Lutvak has stated that the show "is a very low comedy in a very fancy box. There's all that faux classical music and it's all very proper and its Edwardian England and the women are all corseted and everything is buttoned up. But, in reality, it's a low comedy; it's a Bert Lahr, laugh-your-ass-off comedy which I didn't realize while we were writing it."

OUT THERE 2016: A FESTIVAL OF PERFORMANCE ALTERNATIVES

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A Gentleman's Guide to Love & Murder. Photo by Joan Marcus

nesota. This year's *Out There* series looks very promising indeed.

Just imagine Elvis Presley (1935–1977) and Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919) waging a spiritual battle over the Great Plains for the soul of meat packing plant worker named Ann. They are keenly interested about what sort of a person she should become. *Roosevelvis* offers two classic types of American masculinity. Created by The TEAM. (Jan. 7–9)

David Foster Wallace looms as a tragic icon of Generation X. Hailed by some as the greatest writer of that generation, he has captured the imagination with his suicide in a way musician Kurt Cobain did. This *Out There* piece, *A (radically condensed and expanded) Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again After David Foster Wallace*, has been compared to a séance and a eulogy. Created by Daniel Fish. (Jan. 14–16)

Rabih Mroue combines video, images, and text to reflect on the life of his brother Yasser's experiences during the Lebanese Civil War. Yasser, who was shot in the head at age 23, is the primary performer. *Riding on a Cloud* is in Arabic with English subtitles. (Jan. 21–23)

Frenchmen Halory Goerger and Antoine Defoort cross boundaries between theater and visual arts in *Germinal*, one of the most globally acclaimed avant-garde theater works of recent years. Pickaxes, microphones, and four part harmony help facilitates a work that imagines just how we might totally re-invent the world if we could start from scratch. (Jan. 28–30)

THERE ARE SIRENS IN THE CITY

by Leroy Prescott
www.amazon.com

Minneapolis writer Leroy Prescott has captured the very zeitgeist of the Minneapolis sexual underworld from roughly 1978 to 1983. His enthralling novel, *There Are Sirens in the City*, penetrates subcultures of poverty and marginalization while

flooding the senses across the sexual orientation spectrum.

Sirens has major straight, gay, and bisexual characters, and some you may find to be sexually fluid. It was a time — and not that long ago — when all gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and those who bent gender were categorized right alongside pimps, female hookers, alcoholics, male hustlers, and drug abusers by society in general. They were all outcast and equally stigmatized with the same brush as if they were all the same phenomena. That overarching stigma is

implicit within the barriers set up by the masterful Prescott.

A charismatic female hooker and an enigmatic male hustler face unique and utterly dreadful situations. Though the narrator seems to have been defeated by life, he has evolved into a brilliant observer of the diminished subculture he navigates. Cops and those in high places intersect in fascinating ways with the “riff raff.” Moreover, the “riff raff” are profoundly humanized in the face of their foibles. Today's politically correct types and speech police may be offended by Prescott's use of raw and ripe language, but it is fully in keeping with the time and place. And of course, deeply compassionate.

Among the ingenious twists and turns within *There Are Sirens in the City* are interactions set in a porno theater where men who identify as straight, and some who do not, commune physically or silently in wet fantasy. You can almost smell the musty mixture of odors in the place. In this, and other sections, the author graphically, yet delicately, depicts the viscerally raw world of erotic desire, never veering from his inexorable roller-coaster ride careening to the revealing end. Prescott brings to mind Jean Genet, at once an acute and daring observer of the time and place, and a revolutionary in his clear-eyed wisdom about the mysterious multidimensional world of sex and desire. Call Prescott a heterosexual American Genet. ■



There Are Sirens in The City. Photo by Arlis Prescott

Looking Forward to 2016

Is it me or was 2015 just one burst of insanity after the next? I hope you made it through those holidays OK. I'm hoping that the extended family visits were swift and kind and the friends-mas-es (or whatever you call your gathering of chosen family) were wonderful. I hope your pants fit, or are at least close to fitting again. Are you ready for this whole new year? Good things are coming. I can feel it — and nearly taste it. Although, 2015 was the year of big headlines (YES, Spoon and Stable, he's from New York. We get it already!). This is going to be the year of delicious tidings close to home.

Here's what I know is close on the horizon:

Restaurant: Upton 43

Now, chances are very good that chef Erick Harcey's new Linden Hills restaurant is already open by the time you are reading this, but from my vantage point, it's not quite ready.

Why we're excited:

When chef Harcey's game is on, it is a dazzling spectacle of ingenuity. The flavors are comforting and in this endeavor he is drawing inspiration from very close to home. Harcey was in the midst of building the restaurant when he scrapped previous plans and began anew. What poured forth from his soul and mind was one long love letter to a proud way of life and a bit of Minneapolis' Nordic roots. I cannot wait to taste these modern memories.

Restaurant: The Bachelor Farmer Café

Expect the same, carefully edited, sparse elegance in coffee shop form. The bakery case will be stocked by the pastry team inside The Bachelor Farmer. The coffee will be given the same careful attention that the cocktails receive at Marvel Bar. And, if this all sounds a wee bit pretentious,

don't worry — it won't be. The modest café will be a spot to grab a sandwich, a cuppa, and maybe a spot of wifi.

Why we're excited:

Eric and Andrew Dayton conquered rustic fine dining (and helped make toast chic a real thing in Minneapolis). The downstairs Marvel Bar set the standard for local cocktails and now, there will be a café. The North Loop just keeps getting better.

Restaurant: Brut

Chefs Erik Anderson and Jamie Malone set the food world a-flutter when this idea was first announced; however, the two have been pragmatic in approach. Good things take time. Now, the former Sapor location is being remade into Brut. However, the opening date is still TBD.

Why we're Excited:

Two Food & Wine Best New Chefs who are beloved by all who taste their cuisine are pouring their hearts and souls into this project. The duo hosted a few pop-ups last year that were good, have now helped open Scena Tavern, and now are ready to return the focus to Brut.

Restaurant: Alma Café

When the Dunn Brothers coffee shop that was next to Alex Roberts' fine dining restaurant

moved out, the chef decided to make the move to expand with a more casual option and add a boutique hotel above. It's the hotel part that caused the hold up. There had been some snags with permitting and whatnot, but the project continues to move forward. The James Beard Award-winning chef isn't in a hurry. The space has been keeping busy with pop-ups — of both the bakery and art variety.

Why we're excited:

Roberts' Alma continues to deliver plates to swoon over. The fine dining beauty with neighborhood comfort of Restaurant Alma makes for one of the best dinner experiences in the Twin Cities. Meanwhile, Roberts' also created Brasa. The two restaurants in Northeast and on St. Paul's Grand Avenue serve worldly comfort food at affordable prices in a way that should be a business model taught at hospitality school.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ➔

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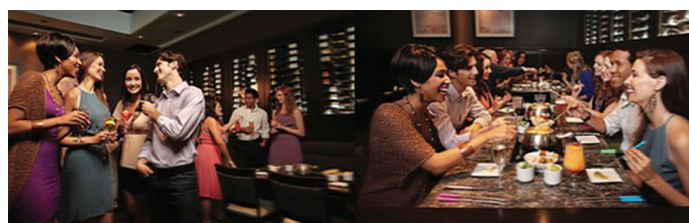
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Restaurant: Mucci

There's a little restaurant location on Randolph Avenue, buried in the heart of the West 7th neighborhood, that has patiently been awaiting the right hand to guide it back into life. Although rumors circulated for years as to who would own it, Tim Niver was eventually the one to snap this baby up and promise to breathe light and love back into the room. Niver is, of course, the singular front-of-house talent who also co-owns The Strip Club Meat and Fish and Saint Dinette.

Why we're excited:

Not only is Niver the most charming and cheeky of hosts, but he is also one of the most passionate restaurateurs in the Twin Cities. This is the project he wants to carry with him into elder age. He imagines himself years from now, still greeting neighbors like family and serving the Italian red-sauce food he loves. In the kitchen will be long-time Strip Club chef de cuisine Chris Uhrich.

Restaurant: The Lexington

The stately restaurant at the corner of Lexington and Grand Avenues in St. Paul has been closed for quite some time while Josh Thoma and Kevin Fitzgerald of Smack Shack with James Beard Award-nominated chef Jack Riebel work with an endless stream of construction crews to restore the historic space to its former glory.

Why we're Excited:

This team already once proved that they know how to revive a historic restaurant (see: Il Foro). Will the Lex regain her glory? Time will tell. And time remains — last I was told, we were looking at a spring opening. Le Sigh.

Restaurant: Milkjam Creamery

Because chef/restaurateur Sameh Wadi wasn't doing enough, what with World Street Kitchen, Saffron, the WSK food truck, and writing a cookbook (*The New Mediterranean Table*), he's decided to open an ice cream shop. Well, who wouldn't?

Why we're excited:

The mango and puffed-wild-rice-topped soft serve at World Street Kitchen. The guy knows how to build a good cone.

Restaurant: Polpo

Just a few steps from the new St. Genevieve comes another restaurant — it's enough to make us eye the real estate section for a home closer to this delicious neighborhood. Chef David Hahne, who gave Minneapolis dining the dearly departed Pane Vïno Dolce and opened Cavé Vin is making his return.

Why we're excited:

Fresh seafood, Mediterranean influence, and a happy hour that starts around 1:30 p.m., Lynnhurst is killing us with address envy. ■



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OUR SCENE

TRAVEL | BY CARLA WALDEMAR | PHOTOS BY CARLA WALDEMAR



Walking along the Moorish city wall in Cáceres.

The Reign In Spain

I joined a long line of visitors to this corner of Southwest Spain called Cáceres: Romans claimed the site in 34 B.C., followed by Moors, who protected the city with brawny stone walls spliced by towers (20 still standing) until a skirmish with the land's Christians in 1229 ushered in the Catholic monarchs' glory days. Their severe stone churches and princely mansions still marshal a tangle of cobblestone lanes beneath gargoyles grimacing from rooftops and ornate family crests above palatial doors; a town as unchanged since Medieval times as the cloistered nuns who sell their sweet confections behind turntables, shielded from sight and sound.

Those sweets are part of the lure of Cáceres today. The tiny town claims top honors as Spain's 2015 Capital of Gastronomy, and it doesn't take long to endorse that title, starting with the polished fare of the Parador de Cáceres, a hotel formed by the union of two Medieval palaces celebrating regional food and wine in its kitchen.

Thanks to its menu, I've become The Ham Whisperer. I was instantly seduced by the near-transparent slices of air-dried Iberian flesh at breakfast. From then on, it was nonstop jamón, climaxing in a final ultra-ham dinner: jamón-wrapped melon; jamón on toast; scrambled eggs with you-know-what, as well as croquettes, ravioli, and quiche starring the hallowed meat. In between, the kitchen devised lamb kebabs; turbot with garlic and tomato; creamy soup glorified by truffles and cod fritters; and pork (ham's close cousin) in a sumptuous grilled acorn/Casar cheese

sauce enriched with the region's signature toasted paprika.

Then at the Palacio de los Golfines, Iberian ham and supple Torta del Casar cheese again led the menu, followed by another nod to tradition: pork with smoked paprika, sauced with more of our new favorite cheese and migas (breadcrumbs sanctified with garlic, lush olive oil, and more smoked paprika).

In contrast, Eustaquio Blanco, in his contempo new restaurant, discarded formality to best the recession by offering "goodly portions made with good products and served with lots of love." Edible evidence: an ultra-creamy p \hat{a} te of partridge adorned with dried fruit; carpaccio of pork (clearly the creature most venerated in this region); heart-stopping Torta de Casar, queen of local cheeses. Oh, and eggs scrambled with asparagus and langoustines (and those are just the starters).

Amid the tapas bars studding the Plaza Major stands the Cayena Kitchen Club, where bantering chef Ivan Hernandez offers demo classes of a menu we'll then enjoy at the adjoining caf \acute{e} . He calls it "peasant cuisine": hearty farmyard provender. I call it heaven: cold gazpacho-like soup centered with chilly cantaloupe granite, followed by caldereta, a lusty stew of the region's famed smoked paprika, sweet peppers, and garlic ("garlic in cooking oil is the best smell in the kitchen") seasoning lamb shanks married with twice-cooked potatoes. Coquillos, our dessert, favors wafers of deep-fried pastry rising from ice cream in a honey drizzle. (Class and

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(From left) Deep fried seafood at upscale San Miguel market. Chveca is the boys' town hood of Madrid. Mini-hamburguesas at upscale San Miguel Market, Madrid.

lunch 50 euros; reserve at www.cayenakitchenclub.com.)

A prime reason for the city's gastronomic award is its superior local products: cheeses, olive oil, Iberian ham, honey, wines, paprika, and cherries. Another is its rich cupboard of influences: Moors, Jews, the cuisine of neighboring Portugal, convent baking, farm fare, and Spanish flair, from traditional dishes to the cutting-edge brilliance at Atrio, a 14-room hotel carved from another former palace and home to its Michelin two-star rated restaurant run by José Polo and his husband, chef Juan Antonio Pérez. Atrio also boasts what's hailed as the best wine cellar in all Spain: 3,400 labels, including 50 astronomically priced Mouton Rothschilds and a whole room of Chateau d'Yquem, perhaps the most-coveted wine in the world.

But we came for the food. The 13-course tasting menu segues from fake peas (crispy pork and "peas" of wasabi, butter, and cream) to Bloody Mary (tomato and green onion ice cream); from cutting-edge risotto with paper-thin mushrooms and translucent cylinder of pigs' trotters to traditional roasted suckling goat; from our beloved Torta del Casar with quince jam and spicy oil to "The Cherry Which Is Not a Cherry (a "fruit of pasta, gelatin and liqueur") with a "pit" of cinnamon-covered white chocolate.

Pursuing our love of Torta to its source, we motored through the countryside to the Museo del Queso, housed in a humble shepherd's home in a town named Casar de Cáceres, then toured one of its famed cheese plants, Quesos del Casar, S.L., which transforms the milk of grass-fed sheep into rounds of ultra-creamy, slightly citric taste — spoon, then swoon.

On another journey into the countryside, we 'ooh'ed the Los Barruecos Natural Monument: granite boulders clasp a pond where storks gather, voted 2015's Best Spot. No argument from me, given its position aside the arresting Vostell Malpartida Museum, a textile factory-turned-haven of dramatic art installations with a socio-political credo, such as the platoons of police motorcycles representing Franco's dictatorial regime and stacks of televisions capped with cement, a symbol of brain-dead viewers. Yoko Ono also donated a work.

En route back, we restored body and spirit at the Hotel Palacio de Arenales and Spa, via more Iberian ham croquettes (yes!); a genius, wild-card salad of pickled quail and cashews; then pork roast, this time sauced with local honey, cinnamon, and lemons.

A stroll through Cáceres reveals a feast for art lovers as well, from its grand cathedral, sporting a majestic carved wooden altarpiece and Black Christ writhing in a side chapel for over 500 years, to the synagogue-turned-chapel of St. Anthony when Jews were forced from Spain, and a 12th-century Arab home, now a museum. The futuristic Visual Arts Cen-

ter, founded by Helga de Alvear in 2010, is a showcase of that connoisseur's eye for provocative contemporary works as witness to our times. The tiny Seven Jardines combines its pleasures: coffeehouse, art gallery, live music, poetry readings, and palm trees rising from the grassy patio. Hungry for a taste? Visit www.spain.info/en and www.turismo.ayto-caceres.es/en.

24 HOURS IN MADRID

San Ginés was ready for me. It's open 24 hours, and has been since 1894. The moment I'm off the plane, I head there for an antidote to jet lag (and anything else that ails you): hot chocolate, thick as fudge, and churros to dip.

Next, on to San Miguel, a reincarnation of a time-treasured market, today housing classy stalls selling everything from cava and caviar to mini-hamburguesas. Well-fed, I head to camera-ready Plaza Mayor (former site of bullfights and burnings at the stake, today crammed with mimes, balloons, and tapas bars). I join a free walking tour (www.madridapie.com) to explore the nearby Literary Quarter, just as Cervantes once did. We pass Restaurant Botín, harking back to 1728, when painter Goya had a day job here. I'll return tonight for its famed suckling pig and celebrity-watching (the King dines here, as did Hemingway).

Till then, I race to my favorite museum, Thyssen-Bornemisza, collected by patrons who seem to have said "One of each, please" about every bold name in art from 13th-century Italians to Andy Warhol. Then, after a stroll in the hip and happening boys' town called Cueva, a detour to investigate the new kid on the culture scene, the Museum of Contemporary Art (Dali onward) in the edgy Conde Duque 'hood near my bed in the Dear Hotel, whose rooftop restaurant stars a complex tomato tartare and cheesecake of sheep milk dusted with violets.

Finally, a shopping fling at El Corte Inglés, the Harrods of Spain (apply at the International Desk for a 10% discount card). Its Serrano location showcases two floors of gastronomy, including tapas curated by three of Madrid's Michelin-starred chefs. Highlights: bacon-wrapped chicken with green chili sauce; dumplings of pigs' ear with strawberry hoisin sauce and aioli; a "club" sandwich of ricotta and quail egg; and coconut/violet sorbet with strawberries, honey rocks, and violet marshmallows. Just say "Si."

Speaking of fine Spanish dining: it starts on an Iberia flight. Chef Luis Bonastre (who worked with Atria's Pérez) organizes 24,000 meals a day that make you "feel like Spain on a plane," including free Spanish wines, even in economy. Business class fliers are spoiled with gazpacho, Iberian pork cheeks, and Torta del Casar cheese pudding among its temptations. ■

ENDNOTES

GAY PRIDE: Others are content to celebrate the day on June 28. Not Madrid: the festival continues well into July with parades, street stalls, sporting events, and live music taking over the city. Cueva acts as nerve center. **LESGAICINEMAD:** the biggest GLBT film festival in the Spanish-speaking world, along with cultural exhibitions (October-November). **MADBEAR:** Cueva plays host in December. **LESBIANS:** Posotras Somos Todas Macro-festival in May.



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www.minnesotahistorycenter.org

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WINTER FARMERS MARKETS

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www.mplsfarmersmarket.com

www.stpaulfarmersmarket.com

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 ➔

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www.walkerart.org

Out There brings startling, vital, provocative, and often joyous new forms of theatrical expression to the Twin Cities. This year's performances include *The TEAM*, Daniel Fish, Rabih Mroué, and Halory Goerger and Antoine Defoort.

Photo by Paula Court

GRRRL SCOUT

Nomad World Pub, Minneapolis

January 9, February 13, and March 12

\$6

www.grrrlscout.com

A queer dance party held every second Saturday, this event is 21+. Although each event has different promotions and events, it's always a queer dance party with DJ Girl Named Jane. Follow Grrrl Scout on Facebook to hear about what is going to make each event unique. Everyone is welcome.

"I RIDE PARK CITY"

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January 9, February 20

www.aftonalps.com

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WINTER FROLIC

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LIFE AMONG THE DAKOTA

Minnesota History Center, St. Paul

January 26

Free

www.minnesotahistorycenter.org

Jane Williamson, an avid abolitionist born into a slave-owning southern family, traveled far from her South Carolina home to Minnesota where she spent the last fifty years of her life teaching and living among the Dakota Indians. Explore her record of life on the Dakota reservation before the war of 1862, which she

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 ➔



Matthew Pagel
Income Tax Professional

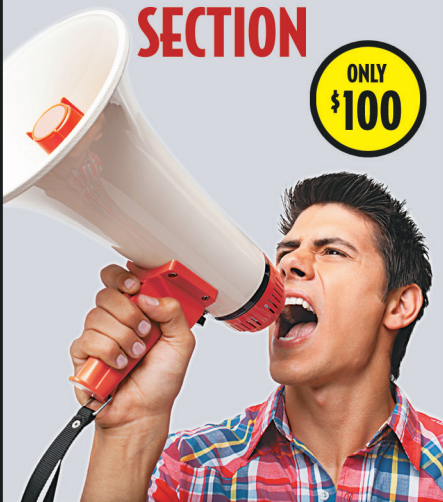
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WHAT TO DO



Photo courtesy of Gary and Joannie McGuffin

described in candid, unexpurgated letters recently brought to light by historian Lois Glewe.

HISTORY HAPPY HOUR: MINNESOTA BREWERIES

Alexander Ramsay House, St. Paul

January 28

\$25

www.mnhs.org

Have a beer with your friends at the Ramsey House while learning about the history of Minnesota breweries. Join Andrew Gieske, a certified beer judge and craft beer enthusiast, for a look at the past, present, and future of brewing in Minnesota. From the earliest breweries in the 1850s to the microbreweries of the 21st century, discover how brewing culture has changed over time and explore its impact upon the state. This program is for those 21 years and older. Ticket price includes two drinks, snacks, presentation, and time to mingle in the mansion.

2016 SAINT PAUL WINTER CARNIVAL

St. Paul

January 28– February 7

Varies by event

www.winter-carnival.com

Featuring a Beer Dabbler, parades, disc golf, a cat show, treasure hunt, contests, fireworks and more, every member of the family is sure to find something they enjoy.

TCGSL WINTER LEAGUE

West St. Paul Sports Center

Starts January 28

\$70

www.tcgsl.leagueapps.com

The number of teams will be determined by the number of people interested. All teams will be in the same division. Teams will play 8 games (4 weeks of doubleheaders) with a day of playoffs at

OMNIFEST 2016

Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul

January 8–March 3

\$8 first film, 15% discount on additional films

www.smm.org

Get a front-row seat to experience larger-than-life adventures! Omnifest 2016 will bring five big films — both new and favorites — to the Omnitheater's giant screen. With a diverse film line-up that will appeal to all ages and interests, it is an ideal family destination this winter. *Humpback Whales* joins scientists as they uncover the secrets of some of the world's largest mammals on their 10,000-mile annual migration; *Mysteries of the Great Lakes* is a glimpse at the majestic lake vistas that Minnesotans find in their own backyard; *Forces of Nature* lets you witness some of nature's most awesome spectacles: earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tornadoes; *Jerusalem* explores the intersection of science, history, and religion in this enigmatic city; and *Tropical Rainforest* is a Science Museum original production that takes you to Australia, Costa Rica, French Guiana, and Malaysia to explore rainforests' long evolutions and recent dramatic declines.

the end of the season. Depending on the number of teams there may be bye weeks in the season but all teams will still play 8 games. You do not need to be a past member of the Twin Cities Goodtime Softball League to sign-up. You also do not need to find a team to be a part of the winter league. Just sign up as part of the free-agent pool and you will be drafted to a team.

ART SLED RALLY

Powderhorn Park, Minneapolis

January 30

Free

www.artsledrally.com

A mass sledding spectacle inspired by the history of mass winter events at Powderhorn Park that began around a hundred years ago.



Photo courtesy of John Hyde and Pacific Stock



11TH ANNUAL U.S. POND HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Lake Nokomis, Minneapolis

January 28–31 (updated date due to ice conditions)

\$500–650 team registration

www.uspondhockey.com

Players from around the world compete in the U.S. Pond Hockey Championships. Either register a team or just show up as a fan to support the great winter pastime.

Photo courtesy of U.S. Pond Hockey Championships

POLAR BEAR PLUNGE

Various Cities

January 30–March 19

Raise a minimum of \$75

www.plungemn.org

A unique opportunity for individuals, organizations and businesses to raise money in support of Special Olympics athletes by jumping into frigid Minnesota waters.

CITY OF LAKES LOPPET SKI FESTIVAL

Lake Calhoun, Minneapolis

February 5–7

Registration fee varies by event

www.lopeet.org

The urban cross country ski festival presents winter activities for the whole family with events jam-packed into one weekend.

BOCK FEST

Schell's Brewery Grounds, New Ulm, MN

February 6

\$10

www.schellsbrewery.com

An all-outdoor event on the grounds of Schell's Brewery, featuring the release of the seasonal bock beer, with food and other drink. The Bock Fest Boys play all day, so come party with 5,000 other "festive" souls and head downtown afterward! Always held, no matter the weather, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., this event is only open to 21+, with most of the crowd between 25 and 45.

MAPLE SYRUP 101

Forest History Center, Grand Rapids, MN

February 6

\$10

www.mnhs.org

Learn how to tap sugar maple trees and make maple syrup. A local syrup producer will show how to tap the trees, collect sap, and perform a simple boil up to produce excellent syrup.

COUP D'CABARET

Coup d'etat, Minneapolis

February 12, March 11

www.facebook.com/Vigilantease

The Vigilantease Collective is bringing the burlesque and drag elite back to Uptown for your favorite late night naughty hour! Make reservations for a late dinner, stay to watch the show, and then finish your evening with the post-show dance party. The cast will meet you on the dance floor to continue to bump-n-grind to the beats of Butch Dandy.

TWIN CITIES LEATHER WEEKEND 2016

The Saloon, Minneapolis

February 12–15

Free

www.twincitiesleather.com

Join in the fun as this year's panel of eight judges crown Mr. Twin Cities Leather 2016. The winner will join a line of six previous Mr. Twin Cities Leather titleholders, and an incredible group of international titleholders competing for International Mr. Leather

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 ➔

WHAT TO DO ❄️

(IML). The title of Mr. Twin Cities Leather is a celebration, to have fun and build community during the title year.

VALENTINE'S DAY TC 5K

Lake Harriet, Minneapolis

February 13

\$30 individual, \$50 couple

www.tcmevents.org

Twin Cities in Motion presents the Twin Cities' oldest winter running event. Open to couples and singles, "relationship status" backtags make the perfect icebreaker. Join the post-race party at Cooper Irish Pub for drink and appetizer specials.

VICTORIAN POETRY SLAM

James J. Hill House, St. Paul

February 14

\$12

www.mnhs.org

Celebrate Valentine's Day the old-fashioned way by enjoying classic 19th century poetry in the elegant drawing room of the James J. Hill House. Actors, wearing 1890s eveningwear, will perform a wide range of humorous and stirring poems by Emily Dickinson, Poe, Longfellow, Browning, and more dealing with love, romance, temperance, sports, and war. Audience members are also invited to bring a short Victorian poem to read aloud throughout the evening.

MINNESOTA VIKINGS ARCTIC BLAST SNOWMOBILE RALLY

Duluth, Minnesota

February 19-21

www.vikings.com/schedule/arctic-blast

The weekend's festivities are scheduled to include: a youth football clinic, Polaris snowmobile lessons and adventures, Vikings meet-and-greets at local Duluth restaurants and Duluth Lawn & Sports and a party to conclude the weekend with over \$30,000 in prizes to be given away. Benefitting the Vikings Children's Fund, the three-day, family-friendly event will include appearances by current and former Minnesota Vikings players, as well as the Minnesota Vikings cheerleaders.

DISNEY ON ICE PRESENTS LET'S CELEBRATE!

Target Center, Minneapolis

February 24-28

Starting at \$12

www.disneyonice.com

Audiences are invited to make an ordinary day extraordinary and enjoy some of the world's most popular festivities, including a winter wonderland with Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse, a Halloween haunt with the Disney Villains, a Hawaiian luau with Lilo and Stitch, a Royal Ball with the Disney Princesses, a Very Merry Un-birthday Party and more in one action-packed and positively unforgettable celebration!

Photo courtesy of the Science Museum of Minnesota



SCIENCE FUSION

Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul

January 16-February 13

\$13 adults, \$10 children museum admission

www.smm.org

Now an annual four-part event series, Science Fusion focuses on the accomplishments of members of the Twin Cities' African American, American Indian, Latino and Hispanic, and Asian American communities in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Adults and kids alike will learn through interactive displays and presentations from scientists and educators at leading Twin Cities companies.

15TH ANNUAL WINTERFEST

Union Depot, St. Paul

February 26-27

\$75 individual night

\$135 two-night package

www.mncraftbrew.org

This craft beer sampling event celebrates beer brewed in Minnesota by the breweries and brew pubs that are current members of the Minnesota Craft Brewers Guild. Chase out the winter chill with a multitude of Winter Warmers, hearty food, beer education, entertainment and music.

2016 RED BULL CRASHED ICE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

St. Paul

February 26-27

Free

www.redbullcrashedice.com

The sport of ice cross downhill (a mix of downhill skiing, skating, and roller derby) continues with a visit to St. Paul as the sport continues to grow in popularity with U.S. fans.

2016 WISHES & MORE WINTER BALL

Marriott City Center, Minneapolis

February 27

\$175-225

www.wishesandmore.org

The theme for 2016 is "Superheroes Go Glam." Guests are encouraged to dress the part in your favorite costume or attend in black-tie style for a "Bruce Wayne Gala." Join the fun for an evening of bidding, dining, dancing, and program showcasing wishes coming true for some of the littlest superheroes battling life-threatening conditions. Proceeds benefit Wishes & More, an organization which enhances the life of a child fighting a terminal or life-threatening condition by providing extraordinary experiences including wishes, scholarships, memorials and more.

GRUMPY OLD MEN FESTIVAL

Wabasha, MN

February 27

Fishing contest is \$5 for adults, \$3 for kids

www.wabashamn.org

Ice fishing contest, Ice Shacks n' Plaid Parade, cribbage tournament, bingo, minnow races, Annual Grumpy Plunge, hotdish luncheon, and more.

FUR FLEE 9

Superior, WI

March 3-6

\$85 registration fee, plus hotel

www.ncbears.com

This year, the bears are channeling ancient Rome and Greece, with mythical gods, gladiators, satyrs,



TWINSFEST 2016

Target Field, Minneapolis

January 29–31

\$20 adults, \$10 children

www.minnesota.twins.mlb.com

One of the largest team-run fan festivals in professional sports, TwinsFest provides Twins fans with exclusive and intimate baseball experiences throughout the course of the weekend. As the largest annual fundraiser for the Minnesota Twins Community Fund, TwinsFest will feature numerous new interactive activities and behind-the-scenes fan experiences that celebrate Twins baseball and Target Field.

Photo by Wayne Kryduba, Minnesota Twins

and nymphs taking center stage. For nine years now, Fur Flee has brought you the premier bear event of the upper midwest, which includes: private hotel with some 200 bears, an Italian and Greek wine tasting, and more. Saturday night erupts with the Mt. Vesuvius Dance Of The Gods. Outfit creativity counts here, think outside the bed-sheet box and come up with something lava hot!

MINNESOTA ROLLERGIRLS

Championship

Roy Wilkins Auditorium, St. Paul

March 5

\$15

www.mnrollergirls.com

Cheer on the Minnesota RollerGirls as they fight for the championship. Don't miss your chance to see who will raise the Golden Skate.

CABIN FEVER DAYS

Winehaven Winery, Chisago City, MN

March 5–6

Free

www.winehaven.com

Got Cabin Fever? Here's the cure! Go and taste some vintage selections that will be brought out of hibernation for this special event. This is the only event of the year where visitors can taste, and purchase, Winehaven's classics that have been aging in the cellar for years. There is no fee for admission and reservations are not required.

18TH ANNUAL SUBWAY BEDRACE FOR BRIDGING

Buck Hill, Burnsville

March 5

\$220

www.subwaybedrace.org

Bedrace for Bridging was created in 1999 by local SUBWAY® Restaurants to raise awareness and funds for Bridging. Teams of four are invited to race down the tubing hill atop specially covered bed mattresses (provided at the race site). The event has grown from less than 20 teams racing down Buck Hill's tubing slope, to an annual event that, since its inception, has raised more than a \$500,000 to support families transitioning out of homelessness.

DUCT TAPE DERBY

Mount Kato, Mankato

March 19

\$5

www.mountkato.com

Build a sled of only cardboard, duct tape, zip ties, stickers, and paint — that's all! Prizes are given out for the sled that goes the farthest, most unique sled, and the best all-kids sled. Spectators are welcome and encouraged! Mount Kato will have food and drinks on site, along with a toasty warm fire, so bring a whole group and make a day out of it!

HOT DASH 5K & 10 MILE

Minneapolis

March 19

\$40–\$71

www.tcmevents.org

The Hot Dash 5K & 10 Mile is for tough Minnesotans to reward themselves for running through the winter and celebrate the great state of Minnesota with friends. Rock your "lumberjack" best or think creatively about how to best represent Minnesota! That's right, judging for best lumberjack costume, Minnesotan, and

winter beard competitions will take place at the event. Following the race, keep the fun going at the post-race beer garden.

THEODORE WIRTH PARK

Minneapolis

\$10 snowboard pass

www.minneapolisparcs.org

Featuring the first inner-city snowboard program, now with snow-making equipment, Theodore Wirth Park also plays host to cross-country skiing and sledding/tubing opportunities.

FROZEN MINNEHAHA FALLS

Minneapolis

Free

www.minneapolisparcs.org

With a slight minty-blue tint, Minnehaha Falls is the perfect backdrop for some cold-weather selfies or just a glorious bit of nature to enjoy.

LEBANON HILLS REGIONAL PARK

Eagan

Free

www.co.dakota.mn.us

With over 12 miles of winter ski trails, the park also features special events open to the public such as candle-lit trails in the evening and nature scavenger hunts. After your fun in the snow, return to the visitors center for a cup of hot chocolate or spiced cider. ■



Photo court



Hungry for the Title

U.S. Figure Skating National Championships

By Shane Lueck

"It's a unique type of pressure because I think that any time you're going for a repeat title, the weight on your shoulders is enormous."

So says current reigning women's U.S. figure skating national champion, Ashley Wagner. Held annually since 1914, the U.S. Figure Skating Championships is the nation's most prestigious figure skating event each year. With three national titles under her belt, when the championships come to St. Paul, Wagner will be going for gold a fourth time. Build in the added pressure that she admits she had an "iffy" 2014, unable to repeat her title that year, and it appears the mental game might be her undoing.

"I did not claim my title again, so this would be my first year back to repeat my title. So there's just a lot of pressure that comes with it. And to have four titles would be such an amazing accomplishment and there's so much additional added pressure from myself because it's something I want for myself. The best thing you can really do for yourself is forget about everything that's happened in the past and focus on the moment and the ice at that time."

Being in the right head space is crucial for skaters, as Wagner exemplified at the Grand Prix Final in Barcelona in December. Wagner finished fourth at the Grand Prix Final, but it was almost a win in her books considering from how far back she'd come.

After a wretched short program, she had a stellar performance in the long program thanks to an inspiring conversation with training partner Adam Rippon, who was back in Los Angeles. The talk, and the Barcelona result, have boosted her confidence for her title defense at the U.S. Championships this month and, she hopes, the World Championships in Boston in March.

"I was saying, 'Maybe this isn't my place any more, maybe this isn't what I should be doing,'" Wagner says. "And he sat me down and said, 'Maybe you should start listening to all these tweets that you send out, all these Instagram posts that say that you just love the sport, and maybe you should just skate because you love it, not think about the results, and the rest will follow.'"

For Wagner, who is considered a "veteran" at age 24 and has been skating for nearly 20 years, she admits that she has just a fraction of time left in the sport. "It's getting to the point where I have to start thinking about what's next. Skating has been a huge part of my life and has defined who I am for so long, so I have to start thinking about what's next and I don't like to."

"I had a couple bad skates [this year] and I got to thinking is this what I want, have I done everything I wanted to do? I went to every competition so solid, but then, under pressure, nothing seemed to be coming together. You start to think about where is this coming from? Is this just because I'm tired or am I over-thinking and over-planning? It seems every time I turn my head I see a new skater who is younger and I'm constantly being challenged by something new. So when you're up against that, it's easy to wonder when is this going to be enough for me?"

But thanks to Adam Rippon, who was featured in a previous issue of *Lavender* magazine, Wagner was able to muster up the mental game to finish strong. "To have a friendship like the one I have with Adam, I am so incredibly lucky," she says. "To have someone who understands exactly what you're going through, who is in the exact same shoes, who has the same doubts, feelings, struggles...it gives some clarity. Your point

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34 ➔

WHAT TO DO ❄️



Photo courtesy of U.S. Figure Skating

of view of what's going on can be small-minded, so when you get someone else who gets what's going on and can give a wider perspective, he was able to snap my head back on and get me back in the competitive mindset."

With the U.S. Championships mere weeks away, the senior ladies free skate is considered a must-see event for Wagner and everyone else. "That's when we're all going for the titles and the claws come out."

Indeed, the ladies competition is a highlight of the U.S. Championships with an impressive list of past champions including Peggy Fleming, Dorothy Hamill, Kristi Yamaguchi, Nancy Kerrigan, Tara Lipinski, and Michelle Kwan among the almost 100 year history of the event. The championship ladies free skate will crown the coveted title of U.S. ladies champion, an honor Ashley Wagner hopes to defend after her victory last year. If Wagner succeeds, she will become a four-time U.S. champion. Others to watch: Gracie Gold, Polina Edmunds, Courtney Hicks, Karen Chen, and Mirai Nagasu.

Wagner admits she never actually got to see in person too many skating events growing up, due to her "military child" upbringing and

moving around a lot, but she grew up watching televised skating.

"I grew up watching the greats," Wagner says, citing Tara Lipinski and Kristi Yamaguchi. "So these women were just mesmerizing to me. They had such command over the ice. Back then skating was huge in the States, so to be able to grow up and see what skating did for these athletes is definitely inspiring and pushed me to get to this level in my own career."

While many enjoy the beauty and grace that is the women's competition, the men also know how to put on a show. Dick Button, Scott Hamilton, Brian Boitano, Todd Eldredge, and Evan Lysacek are just some of the historic names that have been crowned U.S. champion in this event. The history is undeniable and the strength of field makes this one of the toughest events to win annually. Technique, concentration, and the ability to perform under pressure are the key requirements to claim victory in the men's event. As strength is showcased and quadruple jumps are attempted, the men will compete over two days in the short program and a free skate, similar to the ladies competition.

Championship pairs has the best of both worlds, and then some. The pairs event combines the athleticism of singles skating with the precision of ice dancing, mixed with the thrilling acrobatics of overhead lifts and throws. Each movement is performed in unison, demonstrating exact timing and line between partners.

Whereas, if you like *Dancing with the Stars*, the ice dancing event is for you. Unlike pairs skating, ice dancing is based on different aspects of dance, including rhythm, interpretation of the music, and precise steps. Its beauty lies in its limitless creativity, choreography and theatrical and innovative aspects. Ice dancing is the only discipline that permits vocal music and costumes that are traditionally more elaborate in order to enhance the performance.

Approximately 400 figure skaters from all over the United States will compete in the senior, junior, novice, intermediate, and juvenile levels for 20 national titles awarded in ladies' singles, men's singles, pairs, and dance.

But what everyone is talking about going into the 2016 championships is the rivalry between Gracie Gold and Ashley Wagner, something that Wagner is ready for. "I think the drama is going to ensure it's an event to watch," she says. "I'm so excited to have finished the Grand Prix on a high note; I'm heading into nationals with a confidence boost. So I think nationals for me just needs to be a solid event, hopefully leading into Worlds in Boston. That's the main goal. I'm there for my fourth title; I'm hungry."

Approximately 100,000 spectators are expected to attend the 2016 championships, many of whom will travel from outside the Saint Paul area. And for many young skaters, seeing someone like Wagner perform on the ice could

be just the inspiration they need to chase their own Olympic dreams. After all, it was seeing Tara Lipinski that did it for Wagner. It's a reality that the skater hasn't quite grappled with yet.

"I can't even imagine I do that for other people," she says. "But the idea that there is some kid out there watching my skating and saying they want to be able to do that...it's an incredible feeling and that reminds me that I need to have my act together. We need more people to love this sport and be crazy for it."

Getting that younger demographic interested in skating is crucial for the sport since, as Wagner admits, athletes tend to age out of competitive skating sooner rather than later. In the world of figure skating, "veteran" is a frightening word. It means you're pushing retirement because you're all the way into your twenties.

Skating-career years are kind of like dog years, and Wagner is apt to talk about age in a way baffling to laypeople. She'll begin a sentence with "I may be 24, but..." ending in head-shaking disbelief with a clause about how she's still learning. Or else she'll self-deprecate by referring to herself as a 33-year old trapped in a 23-year old's body.

"I might just have one more Olympics in me, and then who knows?" Wagner says. "There are so many roads that I could end up going down. I think when I'm ready to be done with skating, I'll know in my heart. When 2018 rolls around and I want to keep competing, then I'll see, but for now it's up in the air."

Although, she might just be getting better with age. At last year's nationals, Wagner got some vindication with a record-breaking performance, scoring 221.02. In her long program, she landed seven triple jumps, including two in combination. Age might be nothing but a number for Wagner.

Off the ice, Wagner is far and away the most quotable figure skater of her generation, and, most likely, of any other. She was the only athlete at the 2014 Olympic Games from any country and any sport to consistently speak out against Russian President Vladimir Putin's human rights record. Even now, she is actively showing support for the GLBT community, saying, "I think that it is incredible that *Lavender* magazine is partaking in this and I think it's a huge thing for U.S. Figure Skating to give its blessing and show some progress in this sport."

Her fearlessness off the ice, her willingness to say what she thinks at all times, has long been noted by those who report on the sport. And now, with her record-breaking nationals turnout last year and her ability to turn things around after a poor short program throughout this past season, it appears she has found a fearlessness on the ice to match it. ■

For a complete schedule of events and to purchase tickets, head to www.2016uschampionships.com.

OUR LAVENDER

LAVENDER LENS | PHOTOS BY SOPHIA HANTZES



LAVENDER'S FIRST THURSDAY AT UNION

DECEMBER 3, 2015



Shamir

More Than a Hot Mess

By John Mark

Photography by Erin Pederson

Sound check was over, but Shamir was still seated on the edge of the stage, tinkering on his guitar. A less familiar First Avenue, spacious, empty, and lit brightly with fluorescents, was a quiet space to talk. In the two weeks leading up to our interview, Shamir's tour schedule took him to Santa Ana, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Portland, Vancouver, Seattle, Denver, Kansas City, and now Minneapolis.

"I've only been doing this for a year, so I'm getting used to the life," Shamir shared. "Twice already on this tour, a drunk person has come up on the stage and started dancing. The first time the dude was cool and left after the song, the second time this other guy would not leave and security had to get him, I was like 'Oh, Lord.' It's not something I'm trying to stop completely, but if it happens, it happens."

While his talent has been known internationally for just over a year, the Las Vegas-grown musician, has been making music since his early teens. After sending a demo out in the summer of 2013, Shamir was flown to New York by Brooklyn-based indie label, Godmode. His first EP, *Northtown*, received overwhelmingly positive reviews and garnered him a deal with XL Recordings for his first full-length studio album, *Ratchet*, which released in May. In the past year, Shamir has appeared on Andy Cohen's *Watch What Happens Live*, France's *Live du*

Grand Journal, toured with Marina and the Diamonds and Years & Years, interviewed with *Glamour* and *Vogue*, and balanced countless other press and concert obligations with his busy touring and recording schedule.

Shamir paints a quaint picture of his upbringing in North Las Vegas, far from The Strip, where "there's nothing to do." Largely self-taught, from a young age Shamir never shied away from learning something new. "Lately, I've been starting with lyrics, but guitar came first. I taught myself piano; I'm still not that good. My [aunt] got a keyboard, so when I came over, I'd play. I write the best at night, alone in my room."

Though down time has become scarce, family and friends are a priority when Shamir is home. "My friends and I have dinner parties, because when I'm gone, they're starving. None of them know how to cook. As soon as I get home they're like, 'Shamir, cook for us!' So I'll make them a whole feast: pota-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38 ➔





toes, broccoli and cheese, a whole chicken.” A self-described “old person,” cooking is well accompanied by knitting and crocheting as Shamir’s recreational pastimes. “I just crocheted a beanie and scarf. It’s grey, so it goes with my grey jean jacket. I always do matching scarves and hats, it’s kind of my thing. I love it, it’s very relaxing for me.”

The first thing often pointed out about Shamir’s music is the lightness of his voice. Highly melodic and a bit androgynous; for Shamir, it comes from a plain truth. “My voice just never changed.” It’s no secret that the music industry likes to put people in boxes, and for an artist like Shamir, his distinctive voice, gender, and sexuality are likely to become exhausted topics. “Being compared to Prince is super flattering, but I don’t really see it. I think it’s a very surface comparison.” A comment serendipitous to a room where *Purple Rain* was filmed, Shamir’s sense of humor became more apparent as we moved to First Ave’s private garage, where his tour bus was parked. “They get us hotel rooms, but I kind of like sleeping in the bus. It’s like being in a coffin.”

Shamir is likable. This is an innate truth. Whether people are pulled in by his visceral music videos, his potent sound, or his boyish charm, Shamir’s fan base is growing at an alarming rate. In watching his show that evening, an enraptured audience mouthed every word and interacted with Shamir with an enthusiasm that’s rare for an artist so new to the scene. What impressed me even more was the diversity of the audience. Fans of all ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds gathered to bounce to songs like “On the Regular,” to jump to “Call it Off,” and to sway to “Darker.”

In speaking and sharing space with Shamir, a great deal of gratitude runs through his every word. In a world where so often queer artistry and social activism are expected to run hand in hand, it’s my hope that as Shamir is catapulted into the spotlight, the focus remains on his brilliant work. At the end of the day, it’s not his responsibility to be the face of a queer movement or the voice of a new generation. He’s not a young Prince or a Nina Simone. He’s just Shamir, and that’s powerful enough on its own. ■



In his own words:

I like a lot of vintage, I like to thrift. I do have a stylist. She runs a thrift shop, so most — if not all — of my wardrobe is thrifted.

I call "Hot Mess" an autobiography, kind of like a song to myself. All the things that annoy me about me. It's also about embracing my imperfections and encouraging other people to do the same.

When I go to Philly or New York, I go to a lot of DIY shows. After this tour, I'm thinking about staying in Philly.

I'm waiting for him to hit me up. He has my number. Mac De Marco. I saw him when I was eighteen and was instantly obsessed. I'm also obsessed with Marina and the Diamonds. I'm going to get a Marina and the Diamonds tattoo while I'm on tour with her. I'm going to make her watch me while I get her lyrics tattooed on me. One of the first times I met her, we were at a dinner and she pulled me off to the side and said, 'I hate everything, but I love you.' She's super cool, super funny.

I'm so bad when it comes to my visuals, it's why I work with the same director, because he's a friend and he knows everything I like. "In for the Kill" is the best one so far, because it has a story line. It was also funny, because I was only filmed in the spaceship, so we have this whole beautiful video with extras that I've never met.

I can't dance. Not only can I not dance, I just don't like dancing.

My mom is an earth, magic, witch. She doesn't like when I call her a wiccan, apparently that's a different thing.

People are so nice here. Minnesota passive-aggressive is probably better than New York passive-aggressive.

I think I've said a lot to the world already.



2016 Nissan Maxima



In 1988, Nissan introduced what they called the “Four-Door Sports Car.”

That car (the 1989 Nissan Maxima SE) changed Nissan’s fortunes at a time when they were known for reliable cars and trucks with lackluster styling. The Maxima looked like a sports sedan and had the swagger to match. The SE model was available with a manual transmission, sports-tuned suspension, and supportive seats. This particular model was the darling of enthusiasts who were not able to afford the finest cars of that time.

Since then, the big Maxima sedan had its share of ups and downs. Some would say that it had an identity crisis over the years. While it tried to regain its “4DSC” grandeur, it was also playing in a segment that was on

the downslide. It seemed that no one wanted a sporty, V6-powered, front-wheel drive big sedan with a Continuously Variable Transmission connected to it. Not one that billed itself as a “Four-Door Sports Car.”

Sales of the Maxima were semi-existent in the last several years. The entire segment has been losing favor with young buyers, including the Chevrolet Impala, Toyota Avalon, Ford Taurus, and so forth. It got to the point when Nissan considered dropping the Maxima for good.

Then, they had a change of heart. For Nissan to sell another Maxima, it had to be one that would be provocative enough to apply the “4DSC” moniker again. It would also be aspirational for premium buyers, while competing with the likes of the Dodge Charger, Chrysler

300, and the rest of the big car brigade. In all, it would have to be something really special.

For 2016, Nissan presented its eighth generation Maxima. The hype was matched with plenty of praise by my fellow members of the automotive media. Well, I finally got a hold of one to see if Nissan was right to keep the Maxima in the lineup. All I want to know is whether the spirit of the 1989 Maxima SE was recaptured in this new version.

The 1989 Maxima changed the look of Nissan at the time: rounded, taut, and focused. This 2016 edition carried on some of the latest cues seen in the Murano crossover to create a long, short, and lean big sedan. The front end represents the latest in Nissan’s design concepts, with a three-dimensional grille, accented



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with chrome surrounds in the “V” crowning the front end. Angular shapes (including the LED lamps, the remaining headlight units, and the creases) highlight a front end that has snapped a few necks upon seeing it. This leads to a sleek silhouette with curves and angles forging a folded profile all the way to the rear. The same angular design and chrome accenting pervades in the rear, including a pair of wide wraparound tail lamp units.

The roofline is low. One might say it could be coupe-like. The doors have great angular shapes, leading to a C-pillar appliqué that melds the top and bottom of the glasshouse down to the fender. This emulates the Murano’s own C-pillar design and creates a dramatic effect to the entire profile. On this platinum model, eighteen-inch machine finished aluminum flat-spoked wheels round out a car that is both aggressive and luxurious at the same time.

The concept of today’s “Four-Door Sports Car” truly comes to life when stepping inside the Maxima. Because the roofline is low, so is interior height. That creates a “sports car” effect, from the placement of the ignition button on the console to the instrument cluster. Between two decently sized dials is a TFT screen that has a choice of screens to gauge the vehicle’s health, trip, and fuel consumption information. These readouts fit in the steering wheel opening, which in itself is all new. The buttons and switches on the steering wheel are the best Nissan has ever presented with great touch points all around. In all, switches have improved throughout the Maxima’s cabin with great placement.

In the platinum, an eight-inch touch screen dominates the center stack. NissanConnect now drives the system, which includes SiriusXM traffic and weather reporting, customizable alerts for parents of driving-age children for curfew and speed issues, remote access to the vehicle, automatic collision notification, and theft tracking, to name a few. All it takes is a Bluetooth connection and an app on your smartphone to make it all work. The infotainment system also plays back music files from your phone, takes your phone calls, and offers

SiriusXM and HD Radio broadcasts and very good mapping. A knob on the console also controls the infotainment system, in particular the mapping and navigation. Bose supplies eleven speakers for a good sounding cabin.

In the platinum, seating is adorned by quilted leather upholstery. Front positions offer power adjustment for both the driver and passenger, which includes lumbar support with memory adjustment for the driver. The driver also gets a manual thigh adjustment and deep bolsters in the cushion and backrest. They are comfortable and supportive, though tall drivers may have to drop the seat low to clear the panoramic roof. The front seats could be heated and cooled, and the driver gets a heated steering wheel. There is enough legroom for everyone in the back, but headroom is limited for anyone above six-feet tall. The head will get tucked away in a space between the panoramic roof and the rear glass.

If there is a huge highlight in the 2016 Maxima, it is the updated VQ35 V6 engine. This award-winning engine is one of the best in the business. Nissan massaged this engine further, resulting in an output of 300 horsepower and 261 pound-feet of torque. This engine delivers smooth power that is also wonderfully quick. Power from the V6 is filtered through the Xtronic Continuously Variable Transmission. It is improved from the last generation, yet there seems to be a lack of real transmission feel and feedback when it goes through the “ratios.” In truth, this V6 is better suited with a geared-type of automatic transmission. Enthusiasts would rather want a manual gearbox to match its “Four-Door Sports Car” moniker, just like the original 1989 Maxima SE. There is a Sport mode available for more aggressive “shifts,” though the CVT felt happier in Normal mode. The front wheels drive this 3,593-pound sedan.

Driving the Maxima meant having one of the smoothest rides in its class. Even on bumpier roads, the Maxima’s suspension absorbed it well for minimal feel and feedback through the cabin. The car is also quiet, thanks to active noise canceling. In the platinum, handling tended to be softer with some lean through the

turns, though it is quite composed on the road. For better handling, it is suggested to check out the SR model, below the platinum. The SR is a dedicated sportier version that features an Integrated Dynamics-control Module with Active Ride Control, Active Trace Control and Active Engine Brake. In all, this is the one that would drive the way a “Four-Door Sports Car” should.

The electric steering system is very good, with a heavier weight than found in its class. This is a good thing, as it offers solid feel and control at the wheel. The turning radius is good for its size and on-center feel is excellent. Braking tended to be soft at the pedal, though stopping is good in panic and normal situations. The platinum also has active cruise control with distance adjustment, driver attention alert, blind spot monitoring, rear cross traffic alert, moving object detection, and an around-view mirror with a full 360-degree view of the car coming through the infotainment screen. The platinum model also has front collision warning with emergency braking, as sensed from a front monitor.

Being a big car, the Maxima was designed to attain the best fuel economy in its class, with an estimated 30 MPG on the highway. In our testing, the Maxima averaged 24.3 MPG. This appears to be normal for the class.

There are five 2016 Maximas to choose from. The entry-level S model is well equipped, starting at \$32,410. Our platinum tester came with a sticker price of \$40,685. If you want a sportier Maxima, the SR is priced from \$37,670.

For almost eliminating their big sedan, Nissan did pull off a Maxima that is edgy in design, with a paean to its “Four-Door Sports Car” roots. Though one would argue that it falls short in the “4DSC” promise, missing a few key elements that would match that moniker. For being a full-sized car with premium aspirations, it fits that bill nicely.

Perhaps it does not have to be a replica of the game-changing 1989 Nissan Maxima SE. It simply needs to be a solid big car with good road manners and a nice feel all around. That is perhaps good enough for Nissan. ■



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Oh, Just Shut Up!

Sometimes I just want people to shut up.

Last night, I was at a party with a group of intellectuals and they would not stop talking. It wasn't conversation. Rather, it was like being held captive in an interminable TED Talk. No one was actually listening. Rather, each person sat at the edge of their seat, coiled with tension, waiting for their opportunity to suck the oxygen out of the room.

Each person took turns clobbering the audience with polysyllabic jargon, which left me feeling punch drunk and mighty stupid.

I love being in the company of people smarter than me. It's like playing tennis with a superior player — it strengthens your skills. What I don't love is when someone feels the need to prove their intellect by making others feel dim. That's not being smart; it's just being rude. At last night's party, a smug academic loudly corrected one of my friends when she incorrectly used the term "nonplused."

Later, I imagined defending my friend's honor by tossing a drink in the pretentious jackass' face, after which I would ask: "Feeling nonplused? That's the correct use of that term, right?" But, of course, I didn't think of doing that until I was driving home because I'm not clever enough to come up with witty retorts in the moment.

Recently, I discovered that the words moron, imbecile, and idiot mean different things. In fact, they used to be medical terms! After the IQ test was invented in the early 1900s, people with low IQs were classified by those terms depending on where they fell on the scale — with idiots having the lowest IQs followed by imbeciles and morons.

Of course, the true idiots were those who invented that outlandish rating system. They would have been wiser to create designations for those who feel compelled to prove that they're super smart, something along the lines of: pompous, condescending, and insufferable.

There is a time and place to act smarter than everyone else: for example, when you're defending your PhD or debating a global warming-denier. But not at a cocktail party, which by definition is a "mixer." That means you are supposed to mix with other people and not cordon yourself off behind a wall of words.

Here's an interesting fact: the cocktail party is considered an invention! Its progenitor was Mrs. Julius S. Walsh Jr. of St. Louis, Missouri. In 1917, she invited 50 guests to her home at high noon for a one-hour affair, and within weeks, cocktail parties became a St. Louis institution and then spread throughout the world.

Now that's the perfect type of anecdote to bring forward at a cocktail party. It accomplishes the following: a.) it sparks, rather than blocks, conversation; b.) makes you appear knowledgeable; and c.) doesn't make anyone feel stupid. Even though you got this tidbit from the wildly inaccurate Wikipedia, in terms of cocktail chatter, it's much more important to be interesting than factual.

I realize that this is a rant, which, perhaps, is just as unbearable as being a boorish party guest. And I also realize that anti-intellectualism is a serious threat to civilization, and being smart is awesome! But what some smart people don't realize is that a conversation is a dialogue and not a monologue. Ignoring social cues and force-feeding partygoers a treatise on Middle English will guarantee you're not invited to the next soiree.

And, yes, I know that I used the word "treatise" incorrectly in that sentence. But if I said it at a party with a drink in hand, so what? You're allowed to be imprecise and sloppy at parties — that's what the cocktails are for! ■

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(651) 645-2948
www.namihelps.org

Reclaim!

Working to increase access to mental health support for queer and transgender* youth.
3217 Hennepin Ave. S., Ste. 2
Minneapolis, MN 55408
(612) 235-6743
<http://www.reclaim-lgbttyouth.org>

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Quatrefoil Library

Your GLBT Library with stacks of DVDs, books, and magazines. Check out our online catalogue.
1220 E. Lake St.
Minneapolis, MN 55407
(612) 729-2543
www.qlibrary.org

MUSEUM

Minnesota Historical Society Sites & Museums

Make the Minnesota Historical Society's 26 historic sites and museums part of your vacation plans.
www.mnhs.org

Weisman Art Museum

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333 E. River Rd.
Minneapolis, MN
(612) 625-9494
www.wam.umn.edu

MUSIC

MPR & The Current

Providing in depth news coverage, classical music, and emerging artists on our three regional services.
480 Cedar St.
St. Paul, MN 55101
(651) 290-1500
www.mpr.org

Radio K 770

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330 21st Ave. S.
610 Rarig Center
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www.radiok.org

PERFORMING ARTS

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www.cantussings.org

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528 Hennepin Ave.
Minneapolis, MN
www.thecowlescenter.org

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818 S. 2nd St.
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www.HennepinTheatreTrust.org

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(651) 292-4323
www.HistoryTheatre.com

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www.illusiontheater.org

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

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(612) 822-7063
www.JungleTheater.com

Minnesota Orchestra

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Minneapolis, MN
(612) 371-5656
(800) 292-4141
www.minnesotaorchestra.org

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1501 S. 4th St.
Minneapolis, MN
(612) 338-0937
www.mixedblood.com

Northrop - University of Minnesota

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84 Church St. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 625-6600
northrop.umn.edu

Ordway Center for the Performing Arts

Hosting, presenting, and creating performing arts and educational programs that enrich diverse audiences.
345 Washington St.
St. Paul, MN
(651) 224-4222
www.ordway.org

Phoenix Theater

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www.phoenixtheatermpls.org

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mnoopera.org

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(612) 339-SONG (7664)
chorus@tcgmc.org
www.tcgmc.org

VocalEssence

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Minneapolis, MN 55403
(612) 547-1451
www.vocalescence.org

POLITICS & RIGHTS

Human Rights Campaign

Advocates for all GLBT Americans, mobilizes grassroots action, invests strategically to elect fair-minded individuals.
P.O. Box 50608
Minneapolis, MN
www.twincities.hrc.org
www.hrc.org

OutFront Minnesota

Delivering programs/services in the area of public policy, anti-violence, education, training and law.
310 E. 38th St., Ste. 204
Minneapolis, MN
(612) 822-0127
www.outfront.org

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www.tcpride.org

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www.agcmcc.org

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4113 W. 54th St.
Edina, MN
(952) 926-3808
www.eclc.org

First Christian Church - Disciples of Christ

A Movement for Wholeness In A Fragmented World.
610 W. 28th St.
Minneapolis, MN
(612) 870-1868
www.fccminneapolis.org

The House of Hope Presbyterian Church

A Covenant Network Congregation welcoming all people.
797 Summit Ave.
St. Paul, MN
(651) 227-6311
www.hohchurch.org

Pilgrim Lutheran Church

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1935 St. Clair Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55105
(651) 699-6886
www.pilgrimstpaul.org

Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis

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(612) 871-7400
www.plymouth.org

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519 Oak Grove St.
Minneapolis, MN
(612) 870-7800
www.ourcathedral.org

United Methodist Reconciling Churches

Congregations around Minnesota that intentionally welcome all people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
www.mnrcumc.org

Westminster Presbyterian Church

An inclusive, welcoming, open and affirming congregation.
Nicollet Mall at 12th St.
Downtown Minneapolis
(612) 332-3421
www.westminstermpls.org

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Twin Cities Goodtime Softball League (TCGSL)

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P.O. Box 580264
Minneapolis, MN
www.tcgsl.org

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